

Mexico, Cuba, the Philippines, and El Salvador. Closing the book, therefore, we wonder to what domain its findings apply. For a quick summary and comparison of Iran and Nicaragua, for thoughtful consideration of the implications of Theda Skocpol's analyses for contemporary revolutions, and for interesting reflections on the place of religion in those revolutions, Farhi's book serves well. For renewal of general ideas about revolutionary processes, please look elsewhere.

Charles Tilly

Revolutionary Syndicalism. An International Perspective. Ed. by Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe. Scholar Press, Aldershot 1990. xi, 260 pp. £ 32.50.

This useful volume will fill a real need. In the first two decades of this century industrial unrest swept much of the world. In most countries the unrest was associated with "syndicalism", industrial unionism, revolutionary socialism and anarchism. In Europe syndicalists and anarchists spearheaded the charge; in North America "impossibilists" and Wobblies (members of the Industrial Workers of the World). In South America and Australasia men (and less often women) responded. In both the Old and the New World the leaders preached class war, direct action, organisation at the point of production, and some form of One Big Union as the means for liberating labour and achieving a socialist society. The "movement" rarely survived the post-War period although small cadres of men and women continued to dedicate their lives to the old dream and resisted the appeal of Bolshevism. Until the publication of this volume there has been no analysis of either syndicalism or the great wave of industrial unrest from an international perspective. Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe deserve congratulations and thanks for recognising the need for some such study.

As the dust-jacket claims, "Fourteen scholars from eight nations offer [...] the widest-ranging study yet undertaken of the revolutionary syndicalist alternative in the workers' movement in the half century before the Second World War". The editors commissioned twelve essays on the relevant movements in most countries where syndicalism had "a significant impact". In some countries, notably Holland and Germany, syndicalism was never more than a minority movement. Unfortunately there is no essay on Australia or New Zealand although the Industrial Workers of the World enjoyed considerable influence in both countries before and during the First World War. For all that the editors provide a useful trans-national explanation for "The Rise and Fall of Syndicalism" and Thorpe has written an overview of "Syndicalist Internationalism Before World War II". The book fills a large gap and will undoubtedly prove useful for courses in Labour History. The introductory essay, something of a *tour de force*, distils from the various case studies a powerful explanation which is likely to prove more useful than the rest of the book.

The appearance of this volume allows some reflections on the great wave of industrial unrest which occurred in many countries between 1910 and 1922. The editors hoped that the various essays would contribute to an explanation of syn-

dicalism's rise and fall by addressing certain key questions: "It's origins; social and occupational structure; membership patterns; propaganda and significant actions; relations with employers, other trade unions, political parties and the state; and its fate and legacy". Understandably, perhaps, ideology, significant actions, and relations with other left-wing groups dominate most accounts although several authors provide valuable information on membership. In many of the chapters narrative predominates at the expense of explanation and analysis. Only a few authors – mainly the Anglo-American scholars – are sceptical about the role of ideology in causing the unrest and they alone distinguish the unrest from the rise of syndicalism. Nobody gave any attention to Melvyn Dubofsky's use of "the culture of poverty", which did not surprise or disappoint me, but it might have been worthwhile to examine more carefully Larry Peterson's argument with its emphasis on the dual nature of the North American economy.¹

By and large the contributors assume the inevitability of class conflict and the validity of a sociological explanation for unrest. In their introductory chapter the editors warn that "only a tentative answer can be offered" to the "complicated question why syndicalist movements arose in so many places during this particular period [...]" (p. 4). They note the role of agricultural workers, dockers, construction workers and gas workers – "casual seasonal or project labourers, whose working lives were characterised by forms of discontinuity, by episodic work periods, by frequent changes of employer, [...] work site and sometimes of geographic locale as well". Carleton Parker said as much many years ago.² The editors also note the role of miners, railway workers, and factory workers "whose working conditions were being restructured as the effects of the second industrial revolution expanded and multiplied [...]" (an interesting point which none of the case studies analysed). Disillusionment with reformist Labour-Socialist strategies, a radiation effect (used to explain syndicalism's appeal to artisans in some countries), and 'geographical contradictions' also received a brief discussion. Some contributors suggested others, such as the role of immigrants and political marginalisation. Some analysis of both would have been worthwhile. Throughout, however, there is a tendency to confuse syndicalism with the wave of unrest it helped to shape. There is also a tendency to blur the distinctions between industrial unionism, syndicalism, and revolutionary socialism. It would have been interesting to have not only case studies organised by nation states but some systematic comparative analysis of the unrest, especially in specific industries. It would have been illuminating, for instance, to have a comparative study of railway workers in Britain and North America. British railway workers responded with enthusiasm to Tom Mann and the syndicalist message; in North America railway workers remained impervious to the new creed.

All the authors also asked why the movement failed. State repression features in most answers. The editors add, however, that the increase in state functions which benefitted people, such as welfare, also contributed to the demise of syndicalism. They end by warning that the demise may not be final. Few point out that many

¹ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All! A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago, 1969), and Larry Peterson, "The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism", *Labour, Le Travailleur*, 7 (1981), pp. 41–66.

² Carleton Parker, *The Casual Laborer and Other Essays* (New York, 1920).

syndicalist propositions were simply wrong, especially in underestimating the role of politics, state, and culture. In other respects though, most of the contributors conclude, the legacy lives on in the idea of workers' control, industrial unionism, and the tactics of direct action.

This volume provides an excellent introduction to a complex but important phenomenon. There is room for further collaborative work but it is to be hoped that future national studies of syndicalism and its influence will start from here.

Erik Olssen

Toward a Social History of the American Civil War. Exploratory Essays. Ed. by Maris A. Vinovskis. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 1990. xii, 201 pp. £ 25.00. (Paper: £ 8.95).

Feeling akin, perhaps, to Edmund Ruffin firing the ceremonial first shot at Fort Sumter, Maris Vinovskis has unloaded a well-aimed charge at historians who have ignored the social history of the American Civil War. Despite more than fifty thousand books and articles about this internecine war, we retain a very limited assessment of the war's repercussions for civilian life in both the Union and the Confederacy, during and after the war. This remains a major and persistent blind spot in United States historiography. The four-year conflict (between 1861 and 1865) was the most deadly war for Americans, and, like all wars, its cost in human suffering lingered long after smoke had cleared from the battlefields. Although Vinovskis leads this assault, he has enlisted the services of six young and able comrades whose original and diverse contributions about the North will stimulate further scholarship.

Vinovskis fires the opening salvo by asking, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War?" He then modestly proposes "Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations" in an essay published previously in the influential *Journal of American History*. Vinovskis first emphasizes the tragedy of the war by assessing its human costs. Together, Northern and Southern forces lost 618,000 men, but these casualties were disproportionate: about 6% of Northern white males aged 13 to 43 died, while about 18% of their Southern counterparts perished. These heavy losses, Vinovskis reminds us, were "unparalleled" in American history. Casualty rates by themselves tell us little about social history or human suffering, and Vinovskis then centers his aim on one community, Newburyport, Massachusetts, to offer additional insights. Historical analysis through community study is a theme and methodology that permeates this volume.

Although one can debate whether Newburyport – a small maritime center with an ethnically diverse population – was indeed "typical" of other Northern communities, its townspeople experienced the full brunt of war. There as elsewhere, initial war enthusiasm gave way to demoralization, a process reflected in enlistment patterns, increased bounty payments to entice soldiers, and the gradual shift toward federally-imposed conscription. The war cut an especially broad swath through Newburyport, as over forty percent of the town's enlistees were killed, wounded,